

The New York Times.

May 21, 1922

FLAPPERS UPHELD

BY THIS MINISTER

Every Generation Has Had
Their Equivalent, Says Dr.
Harris of Methodist Board.

THEY'RE NOT GOING TO RUN

Doleful Comments About Them
Based on Shortsightedness,
He Insists.

Our young women, now enjoying the rather slighting designation of flappers, and their male equivalents are just about the same as the coquettes and dandies of former generations, and our horror at their actions corresponds to that of our own ancestors at us, according to W. A. Harris LL.D., Corresponding Secretary of the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Dr. Harris, who was formerly President of Northwestern University and Chairman of the Chicago Vice Commission, which made an extensive investigation of the vice situation in that city, refuses to accept the assertion frequently heard that "the world is going to the dogs."

"We are prone to criticize without comparing," Dr. Harris said yesterday. "But when we go into the question with an open mind we find things aren't so bad as many prophets of destruction insist.

"The short dresses of the young girls commonly called flappers have almost become the usual thing now, and have lost much of the suggestiveness they were said to have at first. The practice has lost much of the element of newness which offends our naturally conservative selves. That is where most of our horror at present-day innovations comes from. We are repeating the reactions of our own parents and grandparents. It has become bromidic to say nothing will save the younger generation from itself. It was said of the present generation of fathers and mothers when they were young and insisted on their own manner of doing certain things.

An Uproar at Every Change.

"It is an amusing commentary on this supposedly sophisticated age that we should repeat this bromide of our ancestors and take it so seriously. For instance, every change of women's dress begets it. We had accepted long hair

as being proper for a women, but there is no adamant reason why it should not be supplanted in time by short hair. And then long hair would seem queer. It is very conceivable that we may get accustomed to many of the innovations now earnestly condemned.

"The saving thing about new customs which actually possess bad aspects in suggestiveness of one kind or another is that this suggestiveness dulls to the vanishing point, and the morals of the people are not perceptibly the worse. Instead of continually stimulating impulses of the wrong sort they lose effect by repetition.

"Painting the face is no new thing except in occasion. Belles and famous beauties of the past painted for State occasions. But then it was not good form to wear paint in daylight. Now it is, apparently. That many young women now carry this to extreme is not unusual. There have been people going to extremes in everything since the beginning. Only we forget them unless they happen to be forerunners of something worth remembering.

"An interesting sidelight on the question of comparative morality of the generations is given when older graduates of universities talk among themselves. To hear them recalling their youthful pranks one would easily conclude that the present generation is a vast improvement over them.

"And yet there are many things now taboo among young people which were tolerated in older days. Scientific education has taught us to think clearly concerning solutions of problems, and not to regard the solutions as handed down from some previous age. Matters that were even jokes a generation ago both in public and in private life are regarded with repugnance today, and justly. Group morality continues to crystallize along sane and sensible lines despite digressions which lead many people to think the race is headed fast toward its own destruction.

Real Morality Seen More Clearly.

"The big elements of morality certainly become more tangible in the process of time, and changes of style of dress become small and insignificant factors in comparison. To regard them as evidences of permanent depravity is ridiculous.

"Besides short skirts, paint and powder, and short hair, what distinguishes the so-called flapper from any one else in this age? Her cynicism? I believe in this the flapper and the so-called cake-eater are only reflecting the spirit of the times. The after-war reaction accounts for this in the flapper, as it does in the business man and other types. In my opinion, it all comes back to the old tendency of each generation to view with profound and self-righteous disapproval the new things ushered in by the new generation. The time will never be, probably, when the young folk are regarded in any other light than as bent upon their own destruction and that of the entire human race."